



Testimony of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Connecticut

By Thomas Burr

Appropriations Committee

February 28, 2023

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee; my name is Thomas Burr, and I am the Public Policy and Affiliates Relations Manager of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Connecticut). I am submitting testimony today in regards to **H.B. No. 6659 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025 AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

NAMI is dedicated to building better lives for those with lived experience with mental health conditions, and their families. NAMI Connecticut and its nine local affiliates provide support groups and educational programs for people with mental health conditions and their loved ones and advocates for policies to improve the lives of people affected by mental health conditions.

NAMI's national public policy is focused in 3 main areas, one of which is to improve care. As a national organization, NAMI fights for policies to ensure people get the best possible care. This includes expanding access to health insurance, requiring parity coverage of mental health care, and ensuring that the right services are available at the right time.

Another focus of NAMI's public policy advocacy is to intervene early, where we fight for policies to ensure people get help early. This includes better research to detect and identify mental illness, integration of mental health care into primary care settings, and access to mental health in schools.

The 3rd focus is to divert people involvement in the criminal justice system. NAMI fights for policies to get people help, not handcuffs. This includes expanding access to crisis services, promoting best practices in de-escalation, and diversion of people experiencing psychiatric crises to treatment.

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services part of the Governor's Proposed Budget, **H.B. No. 6659**, includes many good things, such as:

- \$2.7 million for the Discharge and Diversion Program
- Over \$3 million to fund the New 988 Suicide Hotline
- \$500 thousand new caseload growth for the Young Adult Services Program in each year of the biennium

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- Over \$1.2 million to support the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Demonstration. (Funding reallocated from the Substance Use Disorder Waiver Reserve account in the Department of Social Services) to enhance Pregnant Parenting Women programs.
- Over \$1.2 million to support contractual obligations for Beacon Administrative Services Organization Contract for the Behavioral Health Partnership

In addition, we are asking that the following also be included:

- **\$7.7million be appropriated to the DMHAS budget from the General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, for housing supports and services (as outlined in [HB 6554](#))**
- **\$7.5 million be appropriated to the DMHAS budget from the General Fund in FY 24 and \$5 million each year thereafter for the creation of [Peer-run Respite Centers](#)**
- **Increase the proposed 5% cost of living increase to non-profit providers of mental health and addiction services to a 9% cost of living increase in Fiscal Year 2024 and a 7% increase in Fiscal Year 2025, as recommended by the [CT Nonprofit Alliance](#)**

Therefore, in summary, we support H.B. 6659, with the additions mentioned above.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully,

Thomas Burr
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